

993	Author: Chad M. Stewart, Wildlife Research Biologist	3/12/10
	Title: 2007-2008 Statewide Trapping Harvest Survey	

INTRODUCTION

Regulated trapping plays an important role in the management of furbearers. Like hunting and fishing, trapping is regulated and enforced by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Regulated trapping benefits society by minimizing furbearer damages to private property and crops, protecting habitats, maintaining an ecological balance between furbearers and other wildlife species, and minimizing the spread of disease. As one aspect of Indiana's furbearer management program, the Division of Fish and Wildlife conducted a trapper's survey following the 2007-2008 trapping season to estimate furbearer harvest and trapping pressure. A brief summary of that information follows.

METHODS

The trapper's survey consisted of mailing a questionnaire, cover letter, and postage paid return envelope to each individual who purchased a resident trapping license during the 2007-2008 trapping season. Recipients of the questionnaire were asked to record their county of residence and whether they trapped during the 2007-2008 season. Active trappers were then requested to provide information on the number of days trapped, number and type of furbearers harvested, and the number and type of traps used. Regional data was summarized according to Indiana's 6 physiographic regions (Figure 1).

RESULTS

Regulated trapping seasons vary for each furbearer species (Table 1). During Indiana's 2007-2008 regulated trapping season, 3,729 trapping licenses were sold, an increase of 24.5% from 2005-2006. The overall response rate was 51.8%. Of the responding trappers, 72.8% actually trapped a portion of the trapping season.

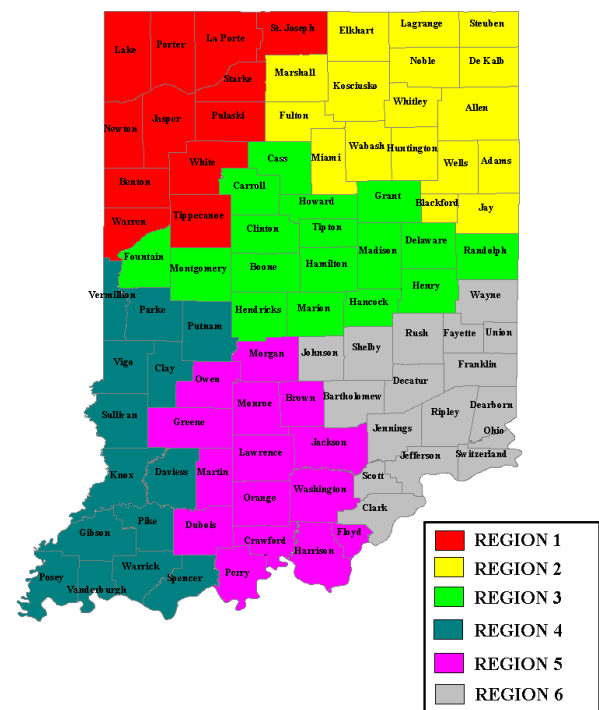


Figure 1. Indiana's fur harvest regions.



These management and research notes are issued periodically to provide a quick source of information on wildlife surveys prior to more formal reports. Any information provided is subject to further analysis and therefore not for publication without permission.

Table 1. Indiana's regulated trapping seasons

Species	Trapping Season
Muskrat, Mink, Long-tailed Weasel, Raccoon, Opossum	November 15, 2007 – January 31, 2008
Beaver	November 15, 2007 – March 15, 2008
Red Fox, Gray Fox, Skunk	October 15, 2007 – January 31, 2008
Coyote	October 15, 2007 – March 15, 2008

The percentage of questionnaire responses was regionally proportional to the number of trapping licenses purchased (Table 2), suggesting a representative sample of trappers across Indiana. The most trapping licenses were purchased in the northeast.

Table 2. Proportion of trapping licenses sold and trapper questionnaire's returned for Indiana's 2007-2008 trapper season.*

	% of Trapping Licenses Sold	% Questionnaires Returned
Region 1	15	14
Region 2	31	33
Region 3	17	14
Region 4	13	13
Region 5	12	12
Region 6	13	12

*Total percentages may be +/- 1-2% due to rounding

HARVEST ESTIMATES

Furbearer harvest tends to vary according to weather conditions, pelt prices, and an assortment of other extrinsic factors. Such factors must be taken into consideration when comparing differences between annual harvest estimates.

Raccoon and muskrat were the two most harvested species (Table 3). Compared to 2005-2006, harvest estimates for raccoon, red fox, opossum, mink, and long-tailed weasel increased 28.6%, 83.1%, 59.2%, 22.9%, and 125%,

respectively, and tend to reflect increasing pelt prices (Table 4). Harvest estimates for all other species declined.

Table 3. Estimated harvest of furbearers by trappers during Indiana's 2005-2006 and 2007-2008 regulated trapping seasons.

Species	2005-2006	2007-2008
Muskrat	29,200	26,565
Raccoon	21,552	27,720
Red Fox	826	1,512
Gray Fox	166	143
Coyote	4,310	4,152
Opossum	4,626	7,364
Beaver	3,815	3,744
Mink	1,574	1,934
Skunk	930	914
Long-tail Weasel	12	27
Total	67,011	74,075

Table 4. Average pelt prices during Indiana's 2005-2006 and 2007-2008 regulated trapping seasons.

Species	2005-2006	2007-2008
Muskrat	\$3.57	\$2.88
Raccoon	\$5.90	\$10.69
Red Fox	\$15.11	\$14.41
Gray Fox	\$17.28	\$30.05
Coyote	\$10.38	\$11.38
Opossum	\$1.16	\$1.45
Beaver	\$13.48	\$12.45
Mink	\$14.73	\$11.00
Skunk	\$2.62	\$3.29
Long-tail Weasel	\$3.67	\$1.50

TRAPPING EFFORT

A total of 2,111,026 trap nights were estimated statewide during the 2007-2008 trapping season, a 2.9% decrease from 2005-2006. The number of trap nights was greatest in the northeastern region of Indiana, which is partly related to the number of trappers and abundance of furbearers found in that region.



These management and research notes are issued periodically to provide a quick source of information on wildlife surveys prior to more formal reports. Any information provided is subject to further analysis and therefore not for publication without permission.

Table 5. Number of trap nights per fur harvest region during the 2007-2008 regulated trapping season.

Region	Trap Nights	% Change
Region 1	341,035	31.8
Region 2	753,823	2.0
Region 3	266,725	0.4
Region 4	221,397	-21.4
Region 5	228,123	-35.9
Region 6	299,923	9.5
Statewide	2,111,026	-2.6

Statewide, the average trapper maintained 20 traps per day and trapped 35 days per season. Trap selection varied by species targeted but foothold traps were used by 69% of trappers while 51% used 110 body gripping traps, 45% used 220 body-gripping traps, 25% used 330 body-gripping traps, and 34% used snares.

Thanks to all the trappers who responded to the 2007-2008 Trapper's Survey!

